

**Mayor Greg Fischer**

**Budget speech**

**May 28, 2015**

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Thank you to the members of the Metro Council.

Thank you to my family. I am grateful for your steady and unwavering support.

And thank you to the citizens of Louisville. It is an honor to be your mayor. Hopefully, you see that my team and I work 24-7 for you, and are excited and energized to lead our city.

Since taking office, I have been continually inspired by the common thread that weaves throughout our city and connects us all.

This thread, woven in and around each of our neighborhoods, connects our shared dreams for safe homes, good schools, healthy families, fulfilling careers and abundant opportunities. It connects us all.

To optimize our success, our citizens must feel connected to the success of our city, and know that the city is connected to their success.

It is our responsibility to enact policies that connect all of our citizens, regardless of their neighborhood, race or ethnicity, so that their human potential is recognized.

Today I come to you to present the most important policy document we work on, the budget, which outlines my proposal to address the most critical challenge cities are facing – how to

create that connected city of opportunity and how to most effectively leverage our citizens' hard-earned taxed dollars.

During the past four budgets, in the midst of the Great Recession, we made strategic choices to help our city thrive.

- First, we got our house in order and eliminated our budget's structural imbalance.
- We eliminated inefficiencies and improved our revenue.
- Working with partners in labor, we controlled the escalating cost of collective bargaining agreements and instituted innovative programs through LouieStat that continue to drive savings and efficiencies.
- The job market has recovered – unemployment is down from over 10 percent to 4.5 percent and we've regained every job lost. And, since taking office, Jefferson County has added over 40,000 jobs.

My thanks to you, members of the Council, for your partnership in these efforts. The budget choices we made, our rebounding economy, and continued positive revenue growth mean that even with no tax increases we will still be able to better invest in critical public services, as well as areas that are primed for continued growth.

The FY16 budget will be 560 million of general fund dollars and is a total budget of \$873 million, with state, federal and capital funding sources included.

Creating pathways for every Louisvillian to a successful, prosperous career is our guiding force to a connected community. Much of my budget proposal focuses on projects and programs that I believe will create those career paths.

First, citizens and businesses must know that we are dedicated to providing the modern, well-maintained infrastructure that's critical to moving goods and products in and around the city, and to providing the quality of life that growing cities require.

Our roads and sidewalks connect us to our homes, careers, where we shop, play and worship.

With Washington mired in political dysfunction, cities and states lead on building vital byways and bridges, paths and parkways. That's why we worked with our state government and Indiana to build the Ohio River Bridges Project, one of the biggest infrastructure projects nationwide.

Not a day goes by I don't hear about roads and sidewalks that need repair. So far this year, we have patched over 156,000 potholes. That is more than three times the number of potholes we repaired in all of last year.

Therefore, my budget will pave and repair the roads and sidewalks that are in the worst condition.

Our roads projects include but aren't limited to:

- Urton Lane;
- Garland Avenue;
- Fairmont Road;
- Blankenbaker and Old Harrods Creek Roads;
- 26<sup>th</sup> Street; and
- Trevilian Way.

Our sidewalk projects are also all across the city, and include but are not limited to:

- Finzer Street;
- Hemlock Way;

- Buechel Bank Road;
- Haney Way; and
- Lake Forest Parkway.

Louisvillians are craving opportunities to live a healthier lifestyle, and many are choosing to bike to work. So, this budget funds over 30 miles of new bike lanes and continues our commitment to a new bike share program.

We are also providing funding so that we can begin stabilizing the riverbank at the Portland Wharf and Shawnee Parks so we can repair this critical bike path, at long last.

This combined investment of \$13.6 million in roads, bike lanes and sidewalks more than doubles what we proposed last year, and is the largest investment we have made in infrastructure during my administration.

But, to put it in context, we have over \$1.2 billion worth of roads and sidewalks. So, while this is a good first step, it only begins to address all of our infrastructure needs.

In addition, if we are going to provide the high quality of life that businesses and workforce demands, we must also maintain and grow our much loved and historic park system. This budget, including federal funds, spends \$7.4 million on park and community center improvements and maintenance.

There is no truer symbol of our efforts to connect people than the Louisville Loop.

At the end of 2015, and with the opening of the Parklands of Floyds Fork, we will be over halfway to our goal of creating a 100-mile, shared-use path for walkers, runners and cyclists that encircles our entire city.

This year we will keep making smart investments in the Loop, and use \$1 million in local funding to leverage \$3.6 million more in federal funds.

I am pleased to announce that the Waterfront Development Corporation will soon be launching a fundraising campaign for the next phase of Waterfront Park.

The current year budget includes \$100,000 for a public art project on that site, and my new budget also provides \$100,000 for a public art project, the second year of a three-year public art commitment.

In today's world, connecting to careers also means connecting online. Record numbers of Louisvillians are using the internet capabilities at our libraries and community centers to connect to education and employment opportunities.

My budget includes funding to provide wireless capability to finish connecting our community centers, and to increase internet speed at our libraries.

Last year, the Bingham Fellows of Leadership Louisville brought together leaders from all across our community to create OneWest, a community development corporation committed to stimulating economic development and community revitalization in West Louisville.

My budget includes a two-year commitment totaling \$100,000 to help them in their work.

Downtown is the heartbeat of our business and cultural community. This budget includes a \$105 million bond that will be paid by the incremental taxes generated from the nearly \$300 million Omni Hotel project.

As the third tallest building in the state, this hotel will do more than change our skyline.

It will create 765 prevailing wage construction jobs, 320 permanent jobs, 600 hotel rooms, 225 apartments, and a much needed Downtown grocery store.

Coupled with the six other hotels under construction and \$200 million convention center expansion, these projects will dramatically transform Louisville into an even greater destination for our visitors, including our flourishing 365-day-a-year bourbon tourism industry.

A healthy downtown, the front door to our city and our central business district, helps all of Louisville thrive.

We are truly on the verge of a Renaissance.

The single greatest tool to connect every Louisvillian to that Renaissance is a quality education.

- A quality education can connect a Beecher Terrace child with the training to code the software of the future, like the Coding at the Beech program;
- It connects a Valley Station mom with the high tech education that advances her career goals, like the Code Louisville program;
- It connects the worlds of art, science and history to a Sycamore Creek kid who's never spent a Sunday afternoon exploring the city's museums, like our Cultural Pass program.

Earlier this year I announced my Cradle to Career Initiative, a philosophy that emphasizes that lifelong learning is the only way to thrive in today's fast-paced, global economy.

My budget includes several targeted investments in innovative education programs to help connect both young and old to prosperity and success.

So that more of our kids show up ready for kindergarten, my budget continues investing in a new Early Childhood Gallery at the Kentucky Science Center, \$125,000 for this year coupled with last year's commitment of \$125,000, and launches kindergarten boot camps at our libraries with a small investment that we hope will have big payoff.

Last year, we opened a magnificent new library for Valley Station.

Now, taking advantage of a state grant and the continued support of the Library Foundation, we are including funding for the second of three regional libraries in our master plan, to be located in Okolona.

Last summer, over 51,000 Cultural Passes were distributed to Louisville's youth, giving them the opportunity to visit our greatest cultural assets.

For me, this program reminds me of my inspiring and talented wife, Alex. Alex's parents are Greek immigrants who gave her all the love and encouragement in the world, but didn't always have all the money in the world.

One day she went to the Field Museum in Chicago, and saw an exhibit on human development. Right then and there, she decided she would become a doctor. And she did, helping thousands of people throughout her career.

Our institutions that celebrate art, science, and history have not only the power to entertain but to inspire and create more little Alexes.

My budget continues funding for this amazing Cultural Pass program, and my thanks goes to the Gheens Foundation, who are funding the lion's share of the program.

So kids can turn those dreams into careers, my budget provides \$200,000 to put kids to work in our Summer Works program. This program has gone from providing jobs to 200 youth in its first summer to 2,500 kids this summer.

My great thanks go to the private employers who have seen the value in creating career pathways for our youth at their companies.

And, in a partnership I am very excited about, the state is going to allow the city, for the first time ever, to use \$500,000 from the TANF program, that's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, which is 100% dedicated to low income youth employment.

Progress continues with our Office of Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods, and this budget includes \$200,000 for the Right Turn program, which provides mentoring to at-risk youth that have had low-level run-ins with law enforcement, to get them back on the right track.

And, to help with our goal of increasing by 55,000 the number of residents with bachelors or associates degrees by 2020, my budget includes funding to support the work of Louisville employers to help employees finish their degrees.

In 2011, Louisville was named an International City of Compassion. But what does compassion mean?

It's more than empathy. It means all citizens find a firm footing, a solid place to launch from and reach their full potential. The only way to become a world class city is to become a place where all are flourishing and thriving.

People need a safe and secure home to do that. Recently I announced a major initiative to create affordable housing for our workforce and families. The Louisville CARES initiative, created in partnership with many of you, would make available 1,500 units with a \$12 million dollar investment.

But, we can't just assist in the building of homes, we must address environmental, health and economic impacts of declining tree canopy and heat island. My budget includes \$275,000 to plant trees throughout our community, and, later in the year, we will unveil a long-term plan with our community partners to further address this challenge.

Many of our metro-owned facilities are in poor condition, none more so than the flood-prone Metro Animal Services facility on Manslick Road.

I'm very proud of their success, increasing the rate of animals released alive from 38 percent when I took office to almost 80 percent today.

Metro Animal Services is launching a campaign to raise \$1.6 million to build a modern facility located near Animal House on Newburg Road, and my budget matches those private funds with \$800,000, on top of the \$1 million we pledged last year.

I urge everyone, the animal lovers in this room and throughout community, to help meet this challenge.

We are also budgeting \$800,000 for the Louisville Zoo, a fantastic source of entertainment and education for both young and old.

I talk regularly about the need for a healthier workforce to help us attract 21<sup>st</sup> Century jobs.

Prior to the Affordable Care Act, we helped subsidize care that University Hospital provides to the indigent who arrive at their facilities.

Because of the tremendous success of kynect and Medicaid expansion, they've gone from 25 percent of their patients uninsured to only 5 percent.

Therefore, we will be able to continue covering the remaining uninsured out of the \$5 million appropriation made last year.

Plus, our Family Health Centers, which are valuable community health partners, have seen a similar decrease in uninsured, and we will therefore be able to lessen their expenditure from \$1.5 million to \$780,000.

More insured individuals will go a long way toward helping us reach our 2020 health goals.

This budget makes investments in epidemiology, health equity, and a much needed needle exchange program, which will go far in helping us reduce certain transmittable diseases.

To enhance public transportation and provide healthier and cleaner air, \$400,000 is budgeted so TARC can leverage by twelve to one a federal grant that will fund five new zero emission buses.

And finally, I want to highlight my first and foremost priority and responsibility. Just as we have in the past, over half of this budget is invested in public safety, including police, fire, and emergency management.

Last year, we began researching body cameras to understand their potential to create a safer and more just city. The events in Ferguson, Baltimore and elsewhere have accentuated the need for modern technology to record police and citizen interactions. Included in this budget is funding for body cameras for all Louisville Metro Police Department officers.

Trust between community members and the police is critical to ensuring we don't become another tragedy on the nightly news. Body cameras are another step to increasing that trust.

1.5 million people call our 911 system every year. With 6,500 emergency responders and 95 agencies using our 911 radio system, we want to ensure that when you need help, the system works, immediately.

So this budget includes a \$7.8 million technology update to our 911 radio system, which is currently operating with aging equipment and outdated technology.

In addition, this budget has upgrades to several of our tornado sirens and adds sirens in new locations, because continued improvement of our emergency notification system is critical to public safety.

The data our city collects belongs to you – our citizens.

Upon taking office, I created a Citizens Bill of Rights, which said that every citizen has a right to straightforward and honest information about any decision we make.

Louisville has been recognized nationally for our leading efforts in open data. But we can do more. That's why I am adding positions to help manage and respond more quickly to open records requests, including experts to help manage the new body camera data.

For citizens to feel connected to our mission they must have access to data that gives them the facts behind our successes and our challenges.

Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King reminds us that, “Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.”

With the smart and compassionate investments I have presented today - investments in job creation, lifelong learning, affordable housing, public safety, body cameras, and targeted projects in East, South and West Louisville, this budget strengthens connections, links Louisvillians, and engages all citizens in our city’s success.

Because we are one city. We are one family.

We are One Louisville.

Thank you.